

REMARKS

By way of the present amendment, claims 1, 9, 22, and 29 have been amended. Prior to the present amendment, claims 3 and 27 have been cancelled. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4-26, and 28-33 remain pending in this application, with claims 1, 9, 22, and 29 being independent claims. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in light of the present amendment and the following remarks, which are fully responsive to the final Office Action.

I. Rejections Under 35 USC § 102

Claims 1, 4, 6 to 10, 12, 14, 17, 19 to 22, 24 to 25, and 28 to 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,913,871 (“Werneth”). The Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

Independent claim 1 has been amended and relates to an apparatus for treating a vascular condition that includes, *inter alia*, a balloon having an outer first layer and an inner second layer, the outer first layer covering only a limited portion of the inner second layer, wherein the outer first layer flows into gaps formed in the stent when the balloon stent assembly is heated to a predetermined temperature and retains the stent on the balloon during intravascular movement and the inner second layer does not flow into the gaps.

Independent claim 9 has also been amended and relates to a balloon stent assembly that includes, *inter alia*, a balloon including at least one non-tacky outer layer and at least one inner layer, the non-tacky outer layer covering only a limited portion of the inner layer, wherein when the balloon is heated at a predetermined temperature the outer layer flows into gaps formed in the stent while the inner layer does not flow.

Independent claim 22 relates to a method of retaining a stent on a balloon that includes an inner layer and an outer layer covering only a limited portion of the inner layer. The method includes the steps of, *inter alia*, mounting the stent onto the balloon and flowing an outer layer of the balloon into the gaps formed in the stent while an inner layer of the balloon does not flow, and while the balloon is heated.

Independent claim 29 relates to a balloon assembly that includes, *inter alia*, a balloon that includes an outer first layer and an inner second layer, the outer first layer covering only a limited portion of the inner second layer, a stent disposed on the balloon, and a sheath disposed on the stent and the balloon wherein the outer first layer flows into gaps formed in the stent when the balloon stent assembly is heated to a predetermined temperature, and retains the stent on the balloon during intravascular movement and the inner second layer does not flow into the gaps.

Basis for the present amendment, in which each of the independent claims recite that the balloon outer layer covers only a limited portion of the inner second layer, is found in the figures and in the present specification at paragraph 0021. The present specification teaches that desirable stent retention is achieved by having the outer layer 22 cover varying limited proportions and configurations of the inner layer 21.

Werneth fails to teach or suggest the claimed feature that a balloon outer layer that retains a stent covers only limited portions of a balloon inner layer. Werneth discloses in FIGs. 2 and 4, and in the specification at column 6, lines 64 to 67 that a balloon may have a polymeric surface layer 110 formed by coating an underlying layer 120 or by coaxial extrusion. From FIG. 2 it is observed that the outer layer 110 appears to exist throughout the entire balloon 35, and there is no suggestion to the contrary in the figures or the specification. Because Werneth fails to teach or suggest at least this feature of the independent claims, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn.

II. Rejections Under 35 USC § 103

Claims 2, 16, 23, 26, and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Werneth in view of WO 95/33422 ("Stolze"). Claims 5 and 18 are rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over Werneth in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,797,877 ("Hamilton"). Further, claims 11, 13, and 15 are rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over Werner in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,807,327 ("Green"). Each of these rejections is respectfully traversed.

Claims 2, 5, 11, 13, 15 to 16, 18, 23, 26, and 33 depend from their respective independent claims, some of the features of which are previously discussed. Therefore, these claims rely on the arguments presented above. Moreover, Stolze, Hamilton, and Green fail to compensate for the previously-discussed deficiencies of Werneth.

Hamilton teaches against an outer layer that flows into gaps formed in the stent when the balloon is heated to a predetermined temperature, as recited in both claims 1 and 9. Instead, Hamilton discloses using an adhesive between inner and outer layers in order to improve layer bonding. See Figure 2d and col. 6, ll. 20-38. Further, Stolze and Green also fail to teach a balloon having an outer layer and an inner layer. Stolze is cited for allegedly teaching pressurization of a balloon to depress a stent into the balloon surface. Green is cited for allegedly teaching that the use of urethane material will create a suitable force for retaining a stent. Both Stolze and Green are silent with regard to a two-layer balloon, and particularly one in which an outer layer covers only limited portions of an inner layer. Because none of the prior art, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the independent claims, it is respectfully requested that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant believes all the pending claims are in condition for allowance and should be passed to issue. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would in any way expedite the prosecution of the application, please do not hesitate to call the undersigned at telephone (707) 543-0221.

Respectfully submitted,



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